2025-2026 RULES AND GUIDELINES

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards, presented by EMC Insurance Companies, is an initiative of Des Moines Performing Arts that celebrates the extraordinary achievements of young musical theater artists. The program aims to create visibility and support for high school musical theater programs, as well as to highlight the importance of arts education.

The program consists of four main components:

1. **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (All registered schools are eligible)**
   Participating schools receive access to exclusive learning opportunities offered throughout the year that are designed to help both students and directors advance their understanding of the craft.
   Workshops and master classes addressing performance, technical, and creative topics are led by theater professionals from the state of Iowa as well as by Broadway industry experts.

2. **ADJUDICATION (Optional process)**
   Panels of adjudicators, comprised of performing arts educators and professionals, review each adjudicated school's musical production. Students and directors receive valuable constructive feedback that can be used to grow and strengthen their future work.

3. **AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS (Adjudicated schools only)**
   Based on adjudication results, adjudicated schools receive awards that honor their achievements in performance, technical, and creative categories.

   The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards are designed to be celebratory rather than competitive in nature. Any student or school at an outstanding level is recognized for their achievement. Multiple honorees may be named in each category as achievements merit.

4. **AWARDS SHOWCASE (Adjudicated schools only)**
   The year culminates in a professionally produced Awards Showcase event held at the Des Moines Civic Center – Iowa's top destination for touring Broadway productions. The Awards Showcase is a full evening featuring excerpts from award-winning productions.

   In addition to being a celebration of student achievements, the Awards Showcase provides students with the opportunity to watch and learn from their musical theater peers, as well as to work directly with a guest choreographer and music director from New York City to rehearse several special medley performances for the Showcase.

   We anticipate that once again Iowa PBS will partner with Des Moines Performing Arts to livestream the Awards Showcase and to broadcast a highlights special statewide.

ELIGIBILITY

General Eligibility

School Location
Eligible high schools must be located in the state of Iowa.

Accreditation
Eligible high schools must be accredited and registered with the Iowa Department of Education.

Adjudication Eligibility

Production Dates for Adjudication
Schools that elect to have their musical adjudicated must have musical production dates between September 29, 2025 and April 26, 2026.

(If your school is not producing a musical during the 2025-2026 school year or is producing a musical outside of eligible production dates listed above, you may register to receive access to IHSMTA learning opportunities only. It is free to register for the learning opportunities only track.)

Casting
If participating in the adjudication process, musical productions must be primarily cast with currently enrolled high school students. In particular, principal roles should be prioritized to high school students.

Qualifying Musicals
To be adjudicated, a musical production qualifies if it fits one of the following categories:

1. A published musical, operetta, or revue that is currently held by a licensing house or is in the public domain.

2. An original piece which features an original script, music, and/or lyrics and which is covered under a valid copyright.

3. An original theatrical compilation of musical/text material from other sources that is presented with the approval or permission of the original creators and their representatives. Performance should be fully staged and costumed. This excludes show choir, choral, vocal jazz arrangements, or cabaret-style performances.

Number of Productions Per School
Due to program capacities and with the goal of as many schools being able to receive adjudication, schools may only submit one production to be adjudicated in a school year.

Showcase Eligibility

Please pick a show that is right for your community but here are some considerations as you look forward to Showcase. Eligibility to perform an excerpt from your school's production at the Awards Showcase is also contingent on IHSMTA being able to secure the needed performance rights. Most productions in the past have been approved with little problem. In the event rights cannot be secured, IHSMTA regrets that it may have to revoke a school's invitation to perform an excerpt from their production.

If your students are interested in the Jimmy Awards, please take a look at the Qualifying Show list provided by the Jimmy Awards: Qualifying Shows and Roles - Jimmy Awards

Please note: Excerpts from GREASE are not eligible for Awards Showcase inclusion due to rights limitations. Schools producing GREASE may still be adjudicated and receive awards; however, they will not be considered for an excerpt feature at the showcase.

PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE

During the program, there may be times when Des Moines Performing Arts will photograph or video students, school staff, volunteers, and audience members. Please be aware that by participating in the program, teachers and students are giving full rights and permissions to Des Moines Performing Arts for the use of such video and photos. Des Moines Performing Arts may use a school's name and students' names in press releases and other program communications. Please inform program staff in writing if an individual's name should not be published.

RECOGNITION OF PARTICIPATION

Before Your Musical

Adjudicated productions are required to recognize their involvement in the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards within their musical playbills or virtual materials.

PRINTED PROGRAMS
Schools printing programs are asked to include a half-page graphic within their program, available online here: PDF version

If your program format cannot be accommodated, please contact program staff to explore alternatives.

PROMOTIONAL INFORMATION
Des Moines Performing Arts encourages schools to further announce their participation in the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards in school newspapers, newsletters, and school or program websites. Des Moines Performing Arts will post promotional information on each participating high school musical on the Des Moines Performing Arts website and social media platforms.

After Your Musical

To help with this promotion, we have found that when all schools release their awards on the same day, more coverage is created statewide. We ask you to refrain from sharing your awards with the general public until May 6, 2026. You may, however, share with your theater community before that date.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Participating schools receive access to various learning opportunities for students and theater educators throughout the year. These learning opportunities may include, but are not limited to, Broadway master classes, technical and performance workshops led by Iowa theater professionals, and opportunities for theater educators. Learning opportunities will be announced throughout the year as details are confirmed. Offerings may be a mix of virtual and in-person formats. Most learning opportunities carry no additional fee, but select opportunities may carry an additional fee.

Examples of past learning opportunities include:

- Masterclasses with National Broadway tour cast members
- Stage Management workshop with professional stage manager Janet Albanese
- Two-day Directors Seminar focused on sharing best practices, answering burning questions, and participating in hands-on workshops, with option for directors to receive license renewal credit.
- Acting-The Song-workshop with Iowa State professor Cason Murphy
- Lighting Design workshop with professional lighting designer Dani Roth

Confirmed learning opportunities will be communicated to directors after registration

Other Resources

Ticket Exchange
Participating schools are invited to participate in the IHSMTA Ticket Exchange program. The ticket exchange encourages students and educators to see other productions and to lend support to the endeavors of their peers. All directors who indicate interest in participating in the ticket exchange on their application will receive a list of other participating schools' production dates and contact information by late September via email. The number of tickets to be exchanged between schools will be determined by the teachers and schools involved. Reservations will be made between schools and not through the Des Moines Performing Arts education department.

Director Peer Review
Participating schools are invited to participate in the Director Peer Review program — a pathway for schools to invite another school director to attend a rehearsal in order to give feedback. Visiting directors serve as another set of eyes to affirm what is working, make suggestions for improvement, etc. Feedback may be given to just the production director or include students and members of the production team.

Directors willing to give feedback to other school productions will be listed in a directory provided to all participating schools by late September via email. Requests for a peer review, scheduling, and other details will be worked out between the participating directors and not through Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards staff.

REGISTRATION TO PARTICIPATE AND FEES

Registrations for the 2025-2026 Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards are accepted online starting **Wednesday, August 20, 2025,** through **Friday, September 5, 2025,** or until program and/or weekend capacity is reached.

Capacity & Wait List Process

Please be advised: a finite number of schools per production weekend will be accepted for adjudication due to anticipated adjudicator capacities. As such, schools are encouraged to register their musicals for adjudication early, as we will honor requests for adjudication on a first-come, first-served basis up to 15 shows per weekend.

If a production registers after initial capacity has been met for its weekend, the school will be wait-listed until program staff determines if there are adequate adjudicators to increase weekend capacity. If additional capacity is possible, the waitlisted school will be notified by September 26th (fall productions) or by January 20th (spring productions). Schools that remain on the wait list have access to learning opportunities and will be eligible for priority registration window for the 2026-2027 season.

Fees

There is no registration fee to participate in the general program for 2025-2026; submitting a registration form on behalf of your school allows you and your students exclusive access to IHSMTA learning opportunities. Most learning opportunities will be offered free of charge, but some may have additional costs associated with participation.

In addition to learning opportunities access, schools may opt into the adjudication process, which carries a $105 adjudication fee.

The adjudication fee (or a purchase order showing that the payment process has been initiated) is due by **October 17, 2025**. Please do not submit payment until after you have received an invoice from Des Moines Performing Arts. If you have any questions or concerns about payment, please contact ihsmta@dmpa.org.

Acceptable payment methods:

1. Checks should be made payable to Des Moines Performing Arts and sent to:
   Des Moines Performing Arts
   Attn: Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards
   221 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

2. The registration fee may be paid by credit card by filling out a Credit Card Authorization Form that will be sent along with a copy of your school's invoice after your registration has been confirmed. Delivery methods will be included on the Authorization Form.

Please note: *IHSMTA reserves the right to withhold a school's feedback, honors, and showcase invitation(s), if applicable, until after the adjudication fee is received in full.*

Multiple Casts or Double-Casting

If a school wishes to have a second cast adjudicated, that carries an adjudication fee of $355 to help cover the associated costs of a second adjudicator team. Please register your second cast during the registration window, but be advised: acceptance of a second cast will not be approved until after registration closes. Please see page 8 for full information regarding double-casting. Priority will be given to ensuring as many schools as possible are able to experience adjudication prior to a school's second cast being accepted. If registering more than one cast, please email ihsmta@dmpa.org to communicate which cast you would like prioritized, if given the choice.

PREVIEW OF REGISTRATION FORM: SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORM PREVIEW

TEACHER/DIRECTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Expectations for the teacher/director's role within the program are:

1. Maintain open and regular communication with Des Moines Performing Arts regarding program needs and participation.

2. Act as the primary liaison between Des Moines Performing Arts and the school community (faculty, students, parents, etc.). This includes but is not limited to:

    - Distribution of important updates and information related to the program to your program participants and administration.
    - Filling out all applicable forms about your production for adjudication, if applicable.
    - Coordinating learning opportunity registrations and participation.
    - Tracking deadlines and submitting necessary assets.
    - Ensuring students receive support submitting materials for any additional award categories.
    - Act as the liaison for adjudication fee payment between Des Moines Performing Arts and the school district if necessary.

3. If participating in adjudication, provide Des Moines Performing Arts with digital production photographs **within 2 weeks** of your final performance for use at the final Awards Showcase and for promotional purposes.

    Submit production photos online at ihstma.awardsplatform.com

    (As the program has grown, we have seen an upwards trend in school production photos being published or broadcast by media outlets such as the *Des Moines Register* in their promotion of the final Awards Showcase. Help us make sure your school is represented well by submitting as high quality photos as possible that feature your final product well.)

4. Coordinate school's participation in end-of-year programming, based on final parameters communicated in the spring. At this time, we anticipate this will likely include the following responsibilities:

    - Schedule and coordinate rehearsals with students prior to the Awards Showcase, if performing.
    - Provide Des Moines Performing Arts with sheet music from any invited performances from your production in a readable format, when and if requested.
    - If your school is invited to perform at the Awards Showcase and accepts the invitation, attend the school's tech rehearsal, on Tuesday, May 26 or Wednesday, May 27 as assigned, as well as a dress rehearsal on the afternoon of May 28 before the Showcase. (The Awards Showcase is currently scheduled for Thursday, May 28, 2026.)
    - Submit or assist students with submission of digital or other materials as requested.
    - Coordinate physical award pick up at the Awards Showcase.
    - Provide Triple Threat Callback information to all qualifying students that are interested.

ADJUDICATION PROCESS

Adjudicators
Adjudicators are qualified performing arts professionals and performing arts educators. All adjudicators go through program training on rubric scoring and feedback. Adjudicators are required to inform program staff if there is a conflict of interest with a participating school and will not be scheduled to review a show for which there is a conflict of interest.

Adjudication stewards are a subset of program staff and adjudicators who help ensure consistency across the Evaluation Rubrics. In some cases, one of the assigned adjudicators may also be an adjudicator steward; in other cases, a fourth adjudicator or a member of program staff will attend as the steward. (Schools will receive no more than three sets of adjudication feedback.)

Rubrics
Adjudicators use a set of standard rubrics to review each school's production. Directors receive a copy of the rubrics prior to the school's production. The rubrics are used to review each production on its own merit and are not used to compare one production against another.
Adjudication Standards and Evaluation Rubrics can be found online here:
Adjudication Standards and Evaluation Rubrics

Before Your Musical

Double-Casting
Productions which double-cast (either completely or only certain roles) must communicate that information to program staff with enough lead time to make sure adjudicators are appropriately scheduled to review the performances by the designated/primary cast. Any individual roles not seen by at least two adjudicators will be ineligible for award consideration.

Fall shows must communicate double-casting schedules by October 3, 2025; spring shows must communicate double-casting schedules by January 27, 2026.

Contingent on adjudicator ability, schools may elect to have both casts adjudicated. If you desire to have both casts reviewed, please communicate that you wish to have both casts reviewed by the dates listed above so that a second adjudicator team can be explored for your production. Please note that an additional $355 fee is assessed to review the second cast's performance dates. A second cast is defined as a full second cast, a partial second cast, or one role with two students alternating performances.

Adjudication Form
Two weeks prior to the production, directors are required to submit a completed Adjudication Form.

Access the Adjudication Form at https://ihsmta.awardsplatform.com/ and select the category that corresponds with your show's production dates.

The Adjudication Form serves several purposes:

> ***Resource and Program Insight***
> The adjudication form provides an opportunity for directors to communicate with adjudicators about the resources available to their school and any additional information they would like to share about their production.
>
> It also confirms performance dates and times, location, and parking and entrance information to help adjudicators when they arrive on site.

Feedback Packet Format – NEW FOR 2025-2026
On the Adjudication Form, directors will identify the format in which they would like to receive their adjudication feedback packet. Directors may elect to receive either 1) both scores and comments OR 2) receive just the comments without scores. Please note: if directors opt to receive comments only, scores will not be shared with directors or students under any circumstance after the feedback packet is issued.

Creating Your Custom Evaluation Form
The Adjudication Form gathers information on cast, creative and technical roles and is used to create the custom evaluation form that adjudicators will fill out for your production.

The following areas of the evaluation form are required for all productions undergoing adjudication:

- Chorus/Ensemble
- Direction
- Choreography
- Scenic Design
- Lighting Design
- Costume Design

The following areas of your evaluation form are customized, based on your show and additional choices of the director:

- Orchestra
  Evaluated for any production using live musician(s). Shows using tracks will not receive an orchestra evaluation.

- Up to 6 Principal Roles or Featured Ensembles*
  See information below on identifying Principal Roles and Featured Ensembles for evaluation

- Up to two additional areas of the director's choice to receive comments only, selected from the following:
  - Makeup-Hair
  - Sound
  - Props Design
  - Music Direction

***<u>Identifying Principal Roles and Featured Ensembles for Evaluation:</u>**
Program staff will work with you prior to filling out the Adjudication Form to determine which principal roles will be reviewed. In most cases, the number of principal roles reviewed is limited to six. If the school is producing a Jimmy Awards qualifying show, your adjudicated roles must include all roles considered qualifying for the Jimmy Awards unless prior authorization has been made with program staff.

Schools may submit more than six principal roles for adjudication only if your production has more than six qualifying roles for the Jimmy Awards and all submitted roles are Jimmy Awards qualifying. See Jimmy Awards qualifying show/role list at:
https://www.jimmyawards.com/participation/qualifying-shows-and-roles/

In the event the production has at least one elective principal role "slot" still available, you may submit a small group of students for consideration as a "featured ensemble." A featured ensemble is considered a small group of 2+ characters who operate primarily as a unit and for whom it would be difficult for adjudicators to distinguish from one another enough to adjudicate as individuals. Examples include the Schoolboard Quartet in *The Music Man* or the Narrator trio in *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Arrange Your Adjudicators' Tickets
Schools will provide complimentary tickets for adjudicators and program staff:

- Up to three adjudicators will attend each adjudicated production.

- A fourth set of tickets may be requested on occasion either of a member of the adjudicator steward committee or program staff.

- Each school must provide two complimentary tickets per adjudicator/steward (generally six to eight tickets total) on the performance date(s) for which adjudicators/stewards are available to attend. Please have these two tickets seated together, to allow for the adjudicator/steward to sit by their guest.

Adjudicators and program staff may not all attend the same performance. Des Moines Performing Arts will communicate with each school director which performance(s) the adjudicators and staff members are attending one week prior to opening night of the production. You will not be able to obtain this information earlier. **Please hold 6 tickets for each performance.** You can release the un-used tickets back to the public once the adjudicator attendance schedule has been sent by DMPA. In extenuating circumstances, occasional last-minute adjudicator schedule changes may be requested.

Tickets should be held at the box office for adjudicators to pick up the night of the performance. Tickets should be held under the name "Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards" and not the name of the adjudicator. Adjudicator names will not be shared with the school in advance.

Adjudicator seating arrangements:

- Reserved Seating: Adjudicator seats should be on an aisle and placed as inconspicuous as possible while still allowing for a strong viewing experience and the ability to take notes during the performance. Adjudicators attending the same performance prefer their pairs of tickets be spaced throughout the auditorium and not right next to each other if possible.

- General Admission: If you anticipate a full house, reserve seats for adjudicators using the same criteria for placement listed above. Please mark the seats simply "RESERVED". Please do not indicate on the signs that they are reserved for adjudicators or the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards. Adjudicators attending the same performance prefer their reserved seats be spaced throughout the auditorium and not all right next to each other. If you anticipate ample open seating, adjudicators may select their own seats.

  Please note: in many GA houses, adjudicators with reserved seats may ultimately choose a different spot to sit that they feel better suits their needs. They are asked to communicate that they moved with someone at the school, but sometimes this step gets missed. In the event you do not see anyone sitting in the seats set aside for an adjudicator, please do not panic. However, we do recommend you send an email to program staff so that we can follow up with the adjudicator to verify if they were or were not present and take appropriate action accordingly.

During your Musical Run

On-Site Adjudicator Expectations

- Adjudicators are asked to arrive at least 5 minutes before the posted curtain time. However, some are traveling far distances. Please extend grace if an adjudicator is late due to unexpected travel issues.
  - We expect adjudicators to communicate as soon as possible if their travel is delayed. Sometimes it is not safe to do so until later. We will communicate with the school as communication comes in if an adjudicator is delayed or is needing to reschedule.
- Adjudicators are expected to stay until the final curtain. Adjudicators are not expected to stay through bows, curtain speeches, after show talks, or senior recognition. We ask them to prioritize their time in writing your feedback.
- While we encourage adjudicators to take notes manually on paper, some adjudicators have indicated a few different reasons they may use their phone. Some use the light to see their writing. Others have indicated that their writing utensil has given out on them mid-show and take notes on their phone in a pinch. If you see an adjudicator using their phone, please note it may be an accessibility need. In all cases, adjudicators should be discreet with their phones and any light sources

After Your Musical Closes

Feedback Receipt
"Adjudicators' comments about the production and scores, if applicable, will be shared with the director within three weeks after the performance. Directors are encouraged to use the adjudicator feedback and rubrics for reflection and future growth. (All efforts are made to turn around feedback sooner, but peak production weeks may necessitate more time for processing.) Directors are encouraged to consider sharing the adjudicator feedback with collaborators, administrators, and students as they feel is appropriate.

Typical feedback processing timeline

AWARDS – TYPES AND PROCESSES

A complete listing of award categories may be found in Appendix A on page 19.

Awards Based Solely on Adjudication
Many awards given through the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards are based solely on adjudicator scores and nominations. No additional submission materials are needed to be considered for the following awards:

Outstanding Musical Production
Outstanding Overall Performance
Outstanding Overall Technical and Creative Achievement
Distinguished Scene
Ensemble*
Student Orchestra*
Principal Role*
Featured Ensemble*

See page 12 for an overview of the system used for determining awards and honors through the adjudication process.

Awards with Additional Components
There are several award categories that require additional submission materials and evaluation for consideration. Additional submission materials are needed to be considered for the following awards:

Behind-The-Scenes Role*
Community Engagement*
Impact Award

Please see pages 13-16 for specific details and processes for these categories with additional application components.

**Award categories indicated with an asterisk are given in two tiers: Outstanding and Special Recognition: An "Outstanding" designation represents the highest degree of excellence achieved within the category. A "Special Recognition" designation can be considered the equivalent of honorable mention.*

Multiple honorees may be named for each category within both tiers based on scores and nominations.

ADJUDICATION-BASED AWARD DETERMINATIONS AND NOTIFICATION

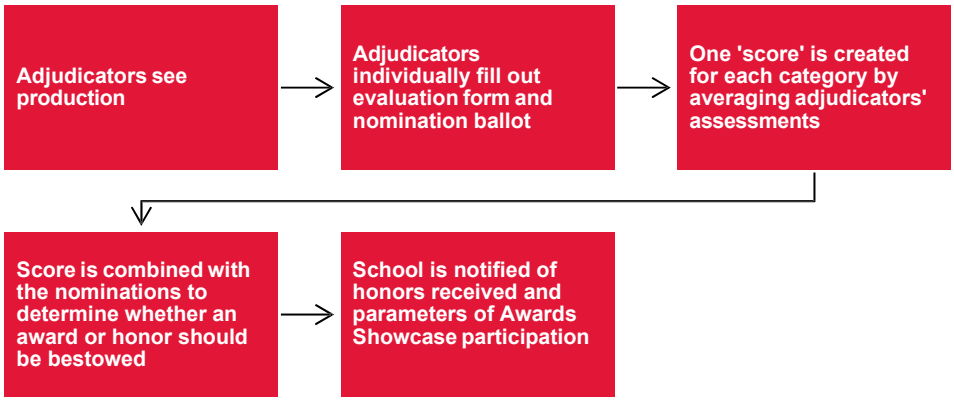
For each category under consideration for an award, each adjudicator takes part in a two-step process after seeing a production:

1. Adjudicators individually fill out an **evaluation form** using the scoring rubric. (The combined evaluation forms are shared back with the directors and schools shortly after the production closes with the goal of providing feedback.)

2. Adjudicators also individually fill out a **nomination ballot**, which is seen only by Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards staff.

Program staff then combine the scores from evaluation forms and nominations from the nomination ballots to determine the awards and recognitions to bestow. First, the evaluation forms are used to **assign a score to each category or individual performance element**. This is done by averaging the adjudicators' assessments utilizing the scoring rubric. The score is then combined with the **number of nominations** received to determine if an award or recognition should be bestowed.

AWARD DETERMINATION PROCESS



Notifications of awards received will be sent to school directors on a rolling basis, based on timing of productions.

Multiple schools and individual students may be recognized for outstanding achievement or special recognition within the same category as scores and nominations warrant. The program is designed to be celebratory and not directly competitive; anyone who meets the standards set for honors will be recognized accordingly.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES AWARDS

As noted, there are some award categories that require additional components outside of adjudication. This includes Behind-The-Scenes Awards.

Behind-The-Scenes Awards for specific areas are given for **individual and team** contributions by students. To evaluate the specific contributions made by students, these areas utilize a **student-created** portfolio in addition to production feedback.

Limit Per School
Schools may submit **no more than six** Behind-the-Scenes portfolios for consideration per school year. Individual students may not submit more than one entry as the head-captain. If submitting as a team, only one submission will be accepted. Please work with your teams to uplift multiple leaders and/or the student's strongest work. Please note that if eligible, only the head-captain and co-captain will be invited to Behind-The-Scenes Day and the Awards Showcase.

Areas
Students whose work or contributions fit in any of the following areas may submit a digital portfolio to be considered for a Behind-The-Scenes recognition. Please select the category that best fits the work. Only one entry per category will be accepted per school.

Accepted Categories:
- Direction
- Music Direction
- Lighting
- Sound
- Scenic
- Props
- Costumes
- Hair/Makeup
- Choreography
- Dramaturgy
- Stage Management
- Technical Direction
- Video Production (used as part of the show)
- Marketing and Publicity
- Video Production (used for promotion)
- Front of House Management (event management, ushers, box office, etc.)
- Playbill/Program Design

Please note: Students serving in assistant capacities may also be considered.

<u>Steps to Be Considered</u>
There are two components to be considered for a Behind-The-Scenes award.

Step One: Submit a Portfolio
Applying students will submit a self-created, digital portfolio in support of their work on the production. Portfolio deadlines are on a rolling basis based on production dates. Those deadlines are as follows:
- October through November productions – Portfolios due by Friday, November 21, 2025 at 4 PM
- December through March productions – Portfolios due by Friday, April 3, 2026 at 4 PM
- April productions – Portfolios due by Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 4 PM

Portfolio Requirements:
1. **Personal essay*** about the students' experience with the production. Potential topics include vision or goal for your role, how it fits within the goals for the overall production, what worked well, challenges, any learning from the process. For a team, the essay can be co-created about multiple experiences or by a representative for the collective experience of the team.

*Acceptable formats for the essay:

- 1-2 page written essay, double-spaced
- 2-4 minute recorded essay; may either take the format of a video with the student(s) speaking to the camera or an audio file of the student recording themselves speaking their response

Regardless of essay format, the content should feel organized and pre-planned. For recorded essays, you will be further prompted to run your recording through a speech to text converter prior to submitting and to copy/paste a transcript of your recording into your submission form. This will aid adjudicators in re-visiting your essay during your interview, for reference purposes.

2. **Artifacts** that demonstrate the student's work on the production. Possible artifacts include scans of renderings, sketches, prompt book, crew or shift lists, lighting plots, videos, and photos. Multiple artifacts are encouraged. Students are expected to upload at least 3 artifacts showing their work. They are limited to 8 artifacts.

   Artifacts can be uploaded in PDF, photos, or videos. Students are encouraged to check the sharing settings of any included links – make sure to set viewing settings to anyone with the link is allowed to view.

   For each artifact, include a short paragraph that identifies your artifact and describes what the artifact demonstrates about your work.

Step Two: Interview with Adjudicator Panel
A brief virtual interview will be scheduled between a panel of adjudicators and the student(s) after the portfolio is received. This is an opportunity for the adjudicators to ask clarifying questions after reviewing the portfolio and for the applicant(s) to provide additional insight into their process.

Interviews are scheduled on a rolling basis based on production dates. Interview dates are as follows:

- October through November productions – Interviews scheduled December 4-5, 2025
- December through March productions – Interviews scheduled April 9-10, 2026
- April productions – Interviews scheduled April 30-May 1, 2026

Adjudicators will be asked to review the applicant's portfolio and virtual interview based on a rubric available here. BEHIND-THE-SCENES RUBRICS (note that rubrics are periodically updated)

NOTE: There is no additional fee to be considered for a Behind-The-Scenes award.

Application Process
All portfolios must be submitted digitally.

Submit your portfolio at ihsmta.awardsplatform.com and select the "Behind-The-Scenes Submission" category.

As part of the form, you will be required to upload an electronic version of your personal essay and your artifact file(s).

As part of the form, you will also indicate your availability for your virtual interview with the adjudicator panel. Assigned interview times will be communicated to students shortly after the portfolio submission deadline.

A special two-page Behind-The-Scenes Overview document written with students in mind is available at the following link. You may find this helpful for sharing with qualifying students when helping them to plan their portfolio materials. It includes a further resource to aid them in planning potential artifacts for their portfolio.

OVERVIEW FOR STUDENTS RESOURCE
NOTE: There is no additional fee to be considered for a Behind-The-Scenes Award.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

As noted, there are some award categories that require additional components outside of adjudication. This includes Community Engagement Awards.

Scope

Theater has the power to move, enlighten and to promote change. The Community Engagement Award is presented to schools that utilize their production and its theme/message in a meaningful way to make a difference within the community. This award challenges schools to use their musical productions to creatively make connections, fill a need, resolve conflict, provide services, or engage their community in other unique ways.

Community Engagement projects typically meet one or more of the following goals:

- Create awareness about a related issue or cause.
- Raise funds or supplies for a related issue or cause.
- Remove participation barriers for those who traditionally do not have access to live arts.

When designing a community engagement project, schools are encouraged to think about the following questions: Was the musical chosen to coincide with a social, political, economic or community initiative? Is there contextual information you are providing to your audience in innovative ways such as post-show discussions, lobby displays or innovative programs with partner organizations who are experts on the topic? How has positive change or learning come about as a direct result of working with the community? What will the impact of this production be after the show has closed?

Recent Examples of Community Engagement Projects by Participating Schools:

- LES MISERABLES includes the story of a mother experiencing homelessness and poverty. Fort Dodge Senior's team came together to collect supplies for a local women's and family shelter.

- The town of Beaumont suffers a tragic car accident that sets the plot of FOOTLOOSE in motion. The cast and crew at Dallas Center-Grimes raised awareness about the dangers of impaired driving through a mock car crash demonstration and other audience education activities at each performance.

- The cast and crew of INTO THE WOODS at Aplington-Parkersburg wanted to emphasize that 'no one is alone.' They partnered with a local mental health organization to provide audiences with mental health resources and to raise funds for the organization.

Application

To be considered, submit an online Community Engagement Award Application. Application deadlines are on a rolling basis based on production dates. Those deadlines are as follows:

- October through November productions – Portfolios due by Friday, November 21, 2025 at 4 PM
- December through March productions – Portfolios due by Friday, April 3, 2026 at 4 PM
- April productions – Portfolios due by Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 4 PM

The application consists of a 1-2 page summary of your project and any supplementary materials that demonstrate its implementation. (A minimum of two photos of the project is required.) In your summary, please clearly articulate the project's goal, any partners, and how it relates to the specific themes or messages of the show you produced.

Applications should be submitted online at ihsmta.awardsplatform.com
NOTE: There is no additional fee to be considered for a Community Engagement Award

IMPACT AWARD

As noted, there are some award categories that require additional components outside of adjudication. This includes the Impact Award.

Scope
While the primary focus of the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is to celebrate student achievements, adults also make tremendous contributions to school drama programs and make a lasting impact on students.

The Impact Award is a student-nominated award presented to adults who lead and/or support their school's productions. This award provides an avenue to recognize educators, staff, or community members, such as parent volunteers, who go above and beyond to support the high school musical experience.

Past recipients include tenured directors, dedicated custodial staff, faithful production team members, and super volunteers. Encourage students to think widely about adults whose depth of impact may or may not be seen by the average audience member.

Nomination Process
To be considered, a current student must complete the nomination process online.

All nominations must be completed and received by **Friday, April 3, 2026 at 4 PM**.

The nomination process consists of the following components:

1. 1-2 page essay written by the nominating student describing how the nominee goes above and beyond to make a positive impact on students' experience in their high school musical.

2. Written testimonials from three to six individuals who have worked directly with the nominee on one or more school musical production(s). Testimonials may come from, but are not limited to:
   - Current high school students
   - Alumni of the school's drama program
   - Production Staff (Director, Music Director, Choreographer, Costumer, etc.)
   - Other adults that work on productions with the nominee (school employees and community members are acceptable)
   - School Administrators
   - Parents

   Each testimonial should be no more than 300 words. The most successful nominations have a mixture of types of Testimonials.

Nominations should be submitted online at ihsmta.awardsplatform.com

(Please note, the nomination form asks for the nominee's years of service at the school, the nominee's role in the school musical, the nominee's contact information, and whether they are a school staff member, a contracted adult or a volunteer.)

NOTE: There is no additional fee to nominate someone for an Impact Award.

AWARDS SHOWCASE – THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2026

One of the goals of the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is to provide as many students as reasonably possible with the experience of showcasing their work at the Des Moines Civic Center and to collaborate with theater professionals. In addition to celebrating their work, this allows students from across all adjudicated schools to be inspired by the work of peers that they may not otherwise have a chance to experience.

Types of Participation - There are several pathways for participation in the Awards Showcase:

1. **Inter-School Medleys (Featuring student representatives from adjudicated schools)**
   Adjudicated schools will have the opportunity to select student representatives to participate in an inter-school medley. Students who perform in the inter-school medleys will work with the Awards Showcase choreographer and music director (typically guest Broadway artists from New York City) as well as students from other schools. Directors will receive information by mid-spring about the parameters of this year's inter-school medleys, including how students qualify to participate. Based on the parameters given, directors will be asked to confirm which of their students will participate in each inter-school medley in advance of the Awards Showcase week.

2. **Production Excerpt Performances**
   Some schools will be invited to showcase an excerpt from their school's musical production. Production Excerpt Performance invitation parameters will be determined closer to the 2026 Awards Showcase. Performance parameters will be sent out with performance invitations. In addition to performance excerpts, productions will also be highlighted in videos throughout the event.

3. **Specialty Student Tracks**
   In addition, there are three specialty tracks for students based on further application or qualification.

   A. **Triple Threat Award Program**
   Select students will be invited to participate in the Triple Threat Award Program – an advanced skills track for select student recipients of Outstanding Achievement in a Principal Role award*. Details on 2025-2026 program components will be provided to directors in early spring. Past components have included: preparing a special medley for the Awards Showcase, individualized coaching sessions, and auditions for prizes such as camp scholarships and representation at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards.

   *Please note: Students who wish to be considered for the Triple Threat Award program will submit virtual materials for a callback process. These materials include (but are not limited to): singing samples, dance samples, a resume, and a statement of interest that will be due by April 22, 2026.

   Students with productions that take place from October-March will go through an initial screening when adjudicators attend their production. If a student meets the initial qualification standards, they will receive an invitation to submit callback materials at the time that their production's awards and honors are shared with their director.

   Any student whose production is in the month of April who wishes to be considered for the Triple Threat track is asked to submit their Callback Materials prior to receiving their adjudication results; this is necessary to ensure adequate time for processing by panelists. Final determinations will be determined both by adjudication results and the strength of their virtual callback materials.

   More information will be released in the spring.

   B. **Behind-The-Scenes Awards Program**
   The head-captain and co-captain who receive Outstanding Achievement in a Behind-the-Scenes roles will be invited to participate in the Behind-The-Scenes Awards track. Details on the 2025-2026 program components will be provided to directors in early spring. Past components have included: networking sessions, exclusive learning opportunities with theatrical professionals, a celebratory meal, and public platform to showcase their work via video.

C. Assistant Stage Manager Program

A limited number of students will have the opportunity to serve as Assistant Stage Managers for the Awards Showcase rehearsals and events. Students will work directly with professional stage management to assist in executing the Awards Showcase event. Details on eligibility requirements and the application process will be provided to directors in early spring. Applications will be due by April 22, 2026.

2025-26 Event Guide

The 2025-26 Event Guide for the IHSMTA Award Showcase will be released in January of 2026. If you would like an example of last year's event guide, please view this link: 2024-25 Event Guide.

APPENDIX A:
2025-2026 AWARDS CATEGORIES

PRODUCTION AWARDS

Outstanding Musical Production
Takes into consideration all performance, technical, and creative elements

Outstanding Overall Performance
Takes into consideration all performance elements

Outstanding Overall Technical and Creative Achievement
Takes into consideration all technical and creative elements

Distinguished Scene

Ensemble*

Student Orchestra*
Requires the orchestra to be comprised of at least 75% enrolled high school students

Community Engagement*
Awarded to schools that create and implement activities or events that engage their local community with their high school's production and its theme or message

INDIVIDUAL/TEAM STUDENT AWARDS

Principal Role*

Featured Ensemble*

Behind-The-Scenes Role**
List of categories can be found on page 13.

> *(Awarded to schools where students serve in these roles and those students completed the portfolio submission process to be considered.)*

OTHER AWARDS

Impact Award
Given to adults, based on student nomination

**Award categories indicated with an asterisk are given in two tiers: Outstanding and Special Recognition:*

- *An "Outstanding" designation represents the highest degree of excellence achieved within the category.*
- *"Special Recognition" can be considered the equivalent of an honorable mention.*

Multiple honorees may be named for each category within both tiers based on scores and nominations.

APPENDIX B:

2025-2026 KEY DATES

August 18, 2025	Priority registration window opens – waitlisted schools from prior school year
August 20, 2025	Registration opens for all eligible high schools
September 5, 2025	Registration deadline for 2025-2026 program
September 29, 2025	First eligible production date for adjudication
September 26, 2025	Fall waitlisted schools notified if they can be accommodated for adjudication
Late September	Ticket Exchange and Director Peer Exchange directories released
October 3, 2025	Double-casting adjudication requests due from fall schools
October 17, 2025	Adjudication fee payment deadline for all adjudicated schools
November 21, 2025	*October-November productions:* Portfolios for behind-the-scenes applications due Community engagement applications due
December 4-5, 2025	*October-November productions:* Behind-the-Scenes interviews
January 20, 2026	Spring waitlisted schools notified if they can be accommodated for adjudication
January 27, 2026	Double-casting adjudication requests due from spring schools
April 3, 2026	Impact Award Nominations due (all schools)
April 3, 2026	*December-March productions:* Portfolios for behind-the-scenes applications due Community engagement applications due
April 9-10, 2026	*December-March productions:* Behind-the-Scenes interviews
April 22, 2026	Triple Threat Callback submissions due
April 22, 2026	Assistant Stage Manager applications due
April 22, 2026	*April productions:* Portfolios for behind-the-scenes applications due Community engagement applications due
April 26, 2026	Final eligible production date for adjudication
April 30-May 1, 2026	*April productions:* Behind-the-Scenes interviews
May 4, 2026	Award Showcase communication day *All performance invitations issued, late spring schools notified of awards, Triple Threat Callback results communicated, etc.*
May 6, 2026	Schools may publicly promote their awards, honors and showcase involvement
May 18-28, 2026	Awards Showcase rehearsals and activity
May 28, 2026	IHSMTA Awards Showcase at the Des Moines Civic Center and livestream on IowaPBS.org